

Essential Letters and Sounds

Dear Parents and carers,

Following an update from the DfE around phonics teaching we have moved to Essential Letters and Sounds; this is a phonics programme based on Letters and Sounds (2007). This new phonics programme will support your children in making quick progress to become fluent and confident readers.

To best support us in teaching your child how to read we ask that you read the decodable text provided by the school **4 times** across the week. Spending 10 minutes a day reading with your child will hugely support them in their journey to becoming an independent reader.

We will be changing children's books once a week on Fridays, this allows your child to re-read each text several times building their confidence and fluency. This is especially important as they begin to learn that the sounds within our language can be spelt in different ways.

It is a key part of learning to read that children re-read words and sentences that they can decode (sound out) until they are fluent (read with ease and precision). By reading texts several times children have the greatest opportunity to achieve this fluency.

The texts sent home are carefully matched to the teaching taking place in school. Your child will be practising what they have been taught in school with you at home. We will only ask children to read books independently when they can decode these by themselves.

Books that are not yet decodable for the children will be a sharing book. These books are there for you to read with your child, helping us to instil a love of reading from the very beginning of their reading journey. These could be read together with your child reading the words they are able to decode or could be read to your child.

If you have any further questions or queries, please do not hesitate to contact Miss Wild (Phonics Lead) or any member of the Y1 teaching team.

Further information

Essential Letters and Sounds

Essential Letters and Sounds (ELS) is our chosen Phonics programme. The aim of ELS is 'Getting all children to read well, quickly'. It teaches children to read by identifying the phonemes (the smallest unit of sound) and graphemes (the written version of the sound) within words and using these to read words.

Children begin learning Phonics at the very beginning of Reception and it is explicitly taught every day during a dedicated slot on the timetable. Children are given the knowledge and the skills to then apply this independently.

Throughout the day, children will use their growing Phonics knowledge to support them in other areas of the curriculum and will have many opportunities to practise their reading. This includes reading 1:1 with a member of staff, with a partner during paired reading and as a class.

Children continue daily Phonics lessons in Year 1 and further through the school to ensure all children become confident, fluent readers.

We follow the ELS progression and sequence. This allows our children to practise their existing phonic knowledge whilst building their understanding of the 'code' of our language GPCs (Grapheme Phoneme Correspondence). As a result, our children can tackle any unfamiliar words that they might discover.

Children experience the joy of books and language whilst rapidly acquiring the skills they need to become fluent independent readers and writers. ELS teaches relevant, useful and ambitious vocabulary to support each child's journey to becoming fluent and independent readers.

We begin by teaching the single letter sounds before moving to digraphs 'sh' (two letters spelling one sound), trigraphs 'igh' (three letters spelling one sound) and quadgraphs 'eigh' (four letters spelling one sound).

We teach children to:

- Decode (read) by identifying each sound within a word and blending them together to read fluently
- Encode (write) by segmenting each sound to write words accurately.

The structure of ELS lessons allows children to know what is coming next, what they need to do, and how to achieve success. This makes it easier for children to learn the GPCs we are teaching (the alphabetic code) and how to apply this when reading.

ELS is designed on the principle that children should 'keep up' rather than 'catch up'. Since interventions are delivered within the lesson by the teacher, any child who is struggling with the new knowledge can be immediately targeted with appropriate support. Where further support is required, 1:1 interventions are used where needed. These interventions are short, specific and effective.



Supporting Reading at Home:

- Children will only read books that are entirely decodable, this means that they should be able to read these books as they already know the code contained within the book.
- We only use pure sounds when decoding words (no 'uh' after the sound)
- We want children to practise reading their book 4 times across the week working on these skills:

Decode – sounding out and blending to read the word.

Fluency – reading words with less obvious decoding.

Expression – using intonation and expression to bring the text to life!

We must use pure sounds when we are pronouncing the sounds and supporting children in reading words. If we mispronounce these sounds, we will make reading harder for our children. Please watch the videos below for how to accurately pronounce these sounds.

At the beginning of each academic year, we will hold an information session for parents and carers to find out more about what we do for Phonics, Reading and English at our schools. Please do join us.

More support for parents and carers can be found here:

<https://home.oxfordowl.co.uk/reading/reading-schemes-oxford-levels/essential-letters-and-sounds/>